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FEBRUARY  
27  
1946

Vol. CCX  
No. 5486

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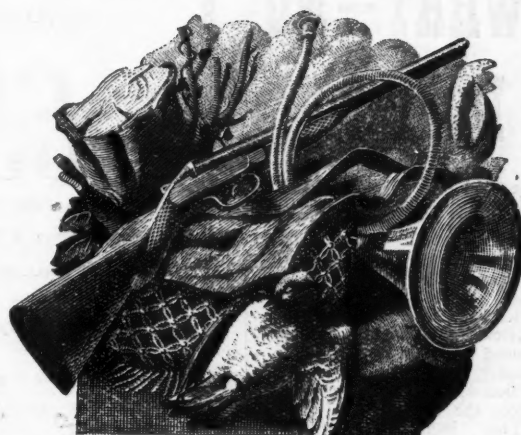
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Q. What is the tobacco plant like?

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future





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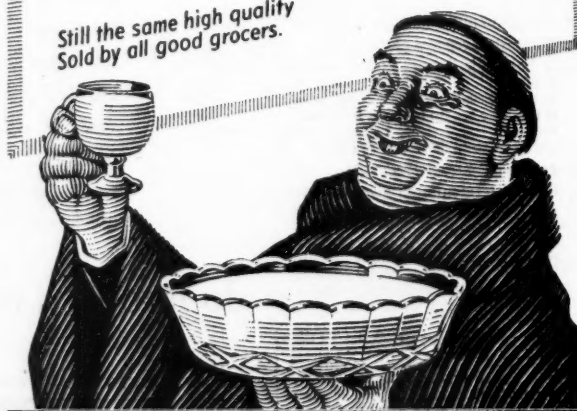
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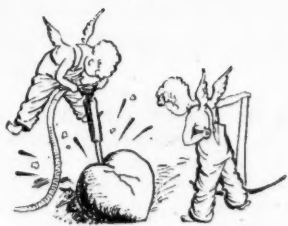
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# PUNCH

Or

The London Charivari



Vol. CCX No. 5486

February 27 1946

## Charivaria

So deep were the floods in some parts of Staffordshire that water economy posters were submerged.

An encouraging feature of the First Assembly of the United Nations was that no motion came before the Security Council protesting against the presence of British troops in Britain.



"HEAVY SACRIFICES  
BRITAIN GIVES LEAD"  
"Daily Telegraph."

Well, few things are heavier than that.

A judge has awarded a widower part of a sum his wife bequeathed to an animal charity. Now the man feels the court's action savours of contempt.

Stocks of Civil Defence clothing are to be sold coupon-free at secondhand prices. The latter proviso is to make up for the coupon concession.

A popular weekly announces that it is coming out of battledress shortly. Pin-up pictures for civilians will be found on the cookery page.

Bookmakers are said to be very worried by the big increase in place-betting on the spring events. This applies particularly to the Boat Race.



A Hampshire woman says her dog has taken a sudden dislike to the radio. Probably upset because its licence has not been doubled too.

### Generalization

"Generalizations about sex are always made by the men."

Woman speaker, reported in daily paper.

An abridged version of Mr. James Agate's autobiographical diaries is announced. We understand it is to be called *Dried Ego*.

An Essex vicar confesses in his parish magazine that losing a stud makes him irritable. By breakfast-time of course there is no trace of clerical choler.



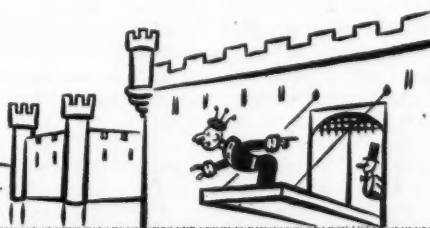
The announcement that there is to be "more variety in fish soon" is causing concern among fishmongers. Instead of a simple "No Fish" notice, they will have to chalk up "No turbot, plaice, sole, salmon, kippers, herrings or mackerel."

"ARTS . . . Tues. next., 7, Getting Married. Mems. only."

Theatre list, daily paper.

What, no sahib?

Burglars recently entered a castle. The indignant occupier says this only emphasizes the scandalous shortage of houses.





## How Fat Was Falstaff?

**M**AURICE Morgann devoted about thirty thousand words, first printed in 1777, to a reasoned proof that Sir John Falstaff was intended by Shakespeare to be brave; he writes with a burning passion that another man might have devoted to proving that a saint was without sin. I do not find that all actors or producers, or even all critics, have read this long essay, and there are certain suggestions in the text that might seem to make the argument difficult to sustain. But Mr. Morgann makes out a very good case on the whole. He points out that a knight had to be brave; that only for courage at that time were men made knights; that Sir John was acknowledged as a renowned captain of men, that, as a page to the Duke of Norfolk, "he broke Scroggan's head when he was but a crack thus high;" that even in his ponderous and wicked, his amazingly eloquent old age, he took prisoner the famous Colville of the Dale; that he did fight the redoubtable Douglas on Shrewsbury field, even if he employed the pardonable ruse of pretending to be dead, when he was really alive; that he is, in fact, a notable prop or bulwark of the Lancastrian cause. And it is perfectly true that in several of these passages where the mighty men of war are gathered together upon the stage, as for instance:

*Flourish of trumpets. Enter THE KING, the PRINCE OF WALES, the ARCHBISHOP OF BODMIN, the EARL OF HAMPSHIRE AND SPRAGG.*

THE KING. How now! What news?

HAMPSHIRE. My lord a post has come  
Hot-foot from Cardigan, his ruffled horse  
Still stained with spurring, and his hair awry  
As though the infection of the ravished earth—

*Enter a messenger*

THE KING. We'll hear his tidings.

MESSANGER. They are grave, my liege,  
Shropshire is ta'en, Montgomery hath fled  
Sussex has gathered half the kerns of Kent  
And Part of Flint has come to Denbighshire.

THE KING. Old Part of Flint and Flint in being old.  
Now to Northampton we'll a tale unfold.

*[Exeunt all]*

—I quote from memory only and without referring to the actual play—in all such passages Sir John Falstaff is quite as likely to be present as one of the general staff, as he is when there is any drinking and swearing and swindling to be done at the Boar's Head in Eastcheap. He is entrusted with the conscribing of recruits. And if he shamefully abused that trust, he *did* arrive at Shrewsbury in time for the battle, and if he was late before York where, owing to the despicable manoeuvre of Prince John, no battle ensued, he *did* take a notable prisoner.

But I could go further than Mr. Morgann goes. Granting the popular modern presentation of the First Part of *Henry IV*, I shall ask you who is the bravest man who fought at Shrewsbury, and who the most cowardly?

The answer to the second question is obviously the King, for Sir Walter Blunt was most surely dressed up as his "stand-in." "Seemably furnished like the King himself," says Hotspur, and no one in the audience can help feeling a pang of sympathy for poor Douglas, who has slain the impostor with a two-handed sword, and perhaps even a shade of pity for Sir Walter himself. Very likely Sir

Walter ought to be wearing the crown on his head, as Richard III did at Bosworth. But whatever he wears he must have the emblazoned armour, and the weapons of the King (you can still see, by the way, some of the harness which Henry V is supposed to have used at Agincourt, if you know where to look for it); and this brings me to the first part of my question.

Sir John Falstaff, who is at least twice as fat as anyone else on Shrewsbury Field and therefore twice as easy a target, wears, in our theatre, no armour at all. Yet being a knight, he must engage in single combat with any man of equal or higher rank, and his device of pretending to be dead when he isn't (though he must have been panting like a volcano) was certainly not as shameful as that of Henry IV. And if he was as senile and decrepit as he is usually shown on the boards, he was in the position of a corpulent dotard doing battle amongst a covey of tanks.

I shall say then that if Sir John *did* so fight on such a field, not clothed in armour, nor in chain-mail, he was the most valorous knight amongst those present, and I do not see who can dispute it.

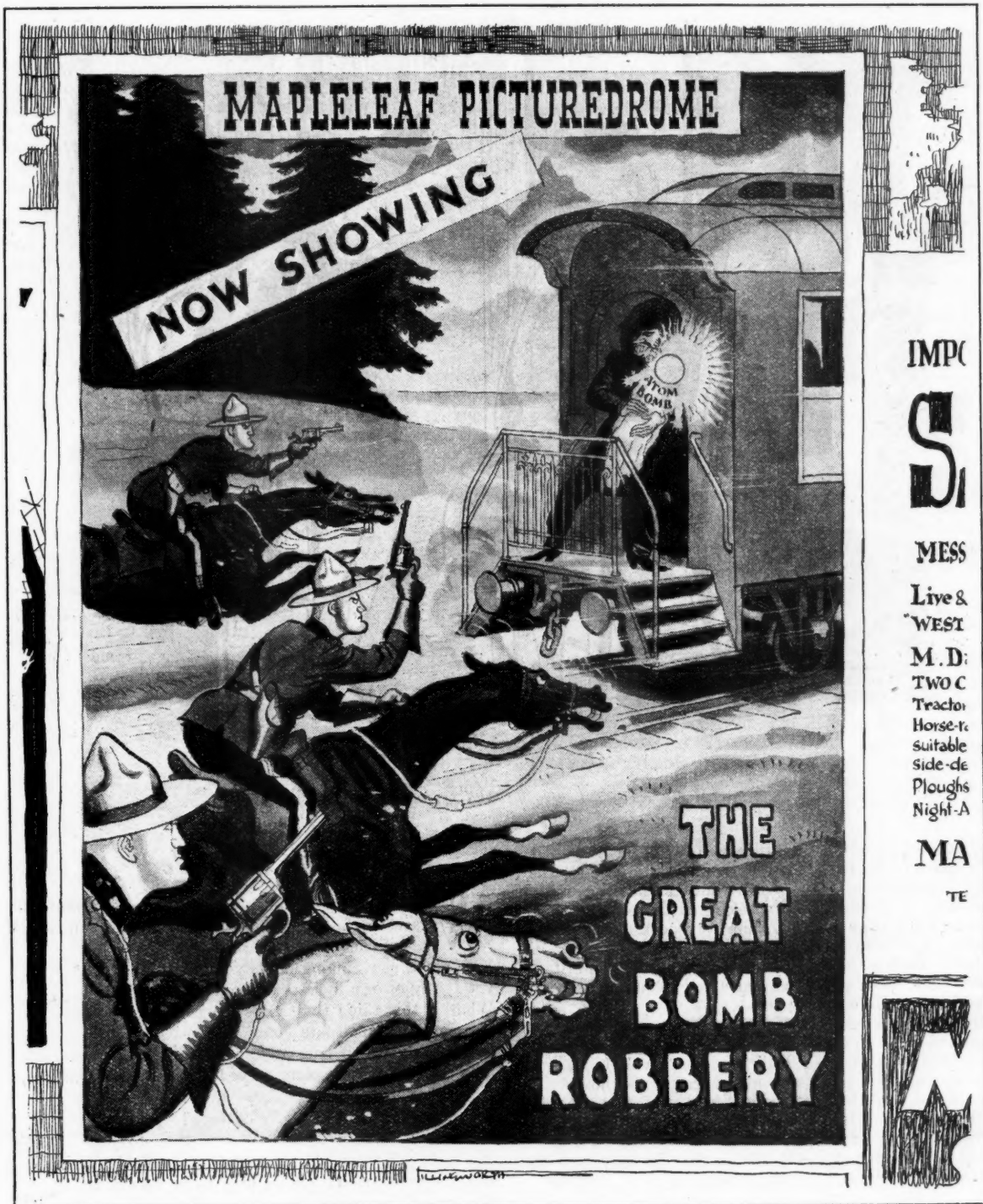
One may answer that Shakespeare did not care about these niceties; he had created a fat, jolly, wicked old man who was irresistibly funny, and if this fat old man could enliven the tedium of a battle between the bravest men of the day, so much the better. But I am not sure whether that is a fair answer.

*Henry IV* is an historical play, and whereas in a farce like *The Merry Wives of Windsor* Queen Elizabeth only asked to see her favourite fat man as a fool, the dramatist had to treat his history more seriously than we do, as you may judge from the scene which I quoted a while ago; and my own notion is that if I must concede a fair measure of fat and desire for self-preservation to Sir John Falstaff, I cannot concede him either contempt for armour, or a total want of mobility. Silenus was fat, but so was William the First when he fell at Mantes, and some rude jokes had been made about *him*. I think Sir John must be dressed as other knights, and be as nimble as his age and his bulk allow. But what bulk? I do not think a gouty man of so immense a girth that he can hardly move one leg forward without using both hands to put it in position would either have got to Shrewsbury from London or have taken the field when he got there. To hoist the dead body of Hotspur on to his back might be the legitimate feat of a portly old gentleman still in fighting trim, but not of a dodderer suffering from elephantiasis.

Falstaff ran away when he was set upon by the wild Prince and Poins. But he *did* run. And in the darkness he could scarcely know how many assailants were attacking him. He produced a miserable following of men at Shrewsbury, but he *did* produce them and lost nearly all of them in the fight. He must (as staged) have been in far worse peril than they. And he did not run away from the Douglas. He threw himself down and pretended to be killed. That he did so successfully says much for his alacrity, though perhaps very little for the cunning of the Scot.

And later in Part II: "Had I but a belly of any indifference, I were simply the most active fellow in Europe." "I think," said Colville, "you are Sir John Falstaff, and in that thought yield me."

It seems fairly clear that the true joke against Sir John is not that he is a fat old coward, but that being old and



# BACK TO THE NINETIES

[The first British moving picture was exhibited almost exactly fifty years ago.]



"Well then, all my husband's clothing coupons."

fat, he is still a famous fighting man. Not many fighting men lived to be old. They were rare antiques and they were probably thin. The rest is wit and wild exaggeration used alike by Falstaff when speaking of himself, and by his friends when they speak to him, or speak about him to others. Let us say that he was as fat as Hamlet was. Or as fat as Burbage was. If everything said about Falstaff's cronies had to be produced realistically you might put a lighthouse on Bardolph's nose.

In short, I think that if Sir John is over-padded, you grant too much to the eyes of the audience and take away something from its ears. Will you have the old bag of guts two yards about the waist or two yards and more? He admits two yards in *The Merry Wives*. But it is probably in the humour of hyperbole. My humour is that he was narrower by about half an ell. Are we to have a kind of whale-oil tank fitted about him so that he may lard the lean earth visibly as he walks along?

EVOE.

"It is strange, and perhaps significant, that the mantle of Byron should now fall on Mr. Bevin!"—*Notts paper*.  
Jolly hard luck, though.

## The Miracle

WHAT is this strange, strange love that binds me fast to the ink-stained desk, the life not worth living?

Free am I, as a singing bird flying the skies,  
yet I stay on my little perch, songless and sad.  
What is this thing that stops me running fleet-foot  
to join the mink coats going into matinées;  
to join the turban hats and the poodles on tartan leads  
in a cup of hot chocolate served every morning in Bond Street?

Is it a love of habit or a love of duty?  
Is it an easier task perhaps to stay than to go?  
Can it be all those old faces, now so ineffably boring,  
and yet so beloved? Or an urge to be sacrificed?  
Oh, love is a strange thing, and who shall construe it:  
but this, this is a love which is nigh to a miracle,  
binding me tight to a life that is not worth the  
living,

free though I be, like a singing bird flying the skies.

V. G.



## Notes on Siam

LORD ADDISON'S announcement in the House of Lords that we are sending "a special organization to secure rice from Siam" may have come as a surprise to those who had forgotten that in the early years of the twentieth century rice formed about four-fifths of the total exports of that country. More recently the proportions may have altered, either because of an increase in the value of other exports, among which may be mentioned teak-wood, pepper, salt, dried fish, cattle and til (or sesame) seed, or because less rice has been produced. But we may take it as a working principle that there is a good deal more rice in Siam than there is anything else, and it is rice that the Government is out to secure. The Government is not interested in pepper or dried fish.

To what extent the Siamese have progressed during the last forty years the present writer is not in a position to say, but there is no denying that in 1908 they were in many ways a backward people. "The system of medicine," observes the authority upon which this short note is largely based, "is curious. The Siamese believe that the arteries are filled with air, and that most diseases are caused by some disturbance in this internal wind." Of course there is no foundation for this belief, nor is it easy to see how the error can have become widespread; for one has only to cut oneself deeply in the wrist to note the absence of the characteristic hiss of escaping air, and it is absurd to suppose that accidents involving the loss of blood were unknown in a country where the wild elephant, tiger, bear, wild pig, deer, monkey and squirrel abound—or at least abounded at the time of which we are speaking. To go a step further, one has only to pose the question whether the Siamese country doctor was accustomed to carry a tyre-repair outfit in his medical bag, in order to be convinced that only a very simple people could for a moment entertain such a ludicrous belief.

It is all the more surprising to read that sanitation, education and the administration of law and justice had by 1908 all been greatly advanced, that "an improved and now effective police system has had beneficial results in many directions," and again that "Bangkok has a tramway system." Land of strange contrasts, whose only manufactures are a species of coarse cloth, rough paper made from the bark of a tree, water-jars and coloured tiles for the roofs of temples, whose annual rainfall is fifty-four inches, and whose national dress both for men and women is the brightly-coloured *panung*, yet whose rivers and coasts swarm with excellent fish and whose efficient police crowd the tramcars of the capital city careless of the air with which (so they maintain) their arteries are inflated.

The composition of the special organization announced by Lord Addison has not yet been made public, but it is essential, if we are to secure the maximum amount of rice from Siam, that its members should be aware of this strange duality, this admixture of the primitive and the up-to-date in the character of the Siamese of 1908. Let us win their confidence by respecting their customs and they will give us all the rice we require, but if we attempt to ride rough-shod over them, if we forget that they are by nature somewhat deficient in trading enterprise and energy, that they are very social, vain and fond of bright dresses and jewellery, and that their intercourse with each other is conducted with a ceremonious attention to distinction of rank, then they will put every obstacle (and Siam is rich in natural obstacles) in our path. It would not be difficult for them to conceal their rice in the trackless

jungle with which the greater portion of the country is covered and in which the python, cobra, reptiles of various kinds, mosquitoes, ants, fire-flies and tropical insects are plentiful. Faced with such a situation, the Government's representatives might be at a loss how to proceed.

It is clear, then, that the members of the mission chosen to conduct negotiations with the Siamese should be of a social disposition, keenly alive to distinctions of rank, and prepared on occasion to wear bright dresses and jewellery. They must also of course be good judges of rice, able to distinguish it at a glance from pepper, dried fish or sesame seed, of all of which the Siamese have been trying to get rid, as we have seen, since 1908 at least. Plenty of men with the necessary qualifications can, it goes without saying, be found in the Government ranks, but not all of them perhaps will take sufficiently readily to betel-nut chewing, which, we are told, is universal in Siam and discolours the teeth. Too much attention cannot be devoted to this point, for their fondness for ceremonial prejudices the Siamese against the visitor who declines a proffered nut.

The provision of containers for the rice should present no problem; there is likely to be a plentiful supply of gunny-bags, which as recently as 1905 were among the seven most important imports of the country. About transport not much is known here, except that a railway connecting Bangkok with Paknam was opened in 1893, and Bangkok itself of course has its excellent tramway. The Government may be able to get more recent information from members of the Services who have been in those parts since 1908. Elephants abound, as we have seen, and in this connection, it is interesting to note that the famous white elephants kept in the courtyard in the royal palace at Bangkok are not, as is popularly supposed, fed from golden dishes, nor are they regarded with any special veneration. But whether these animals have fallen so low in the popular regard that they can be impressed, without injury to the nation's susceptibilities, for the transportation of rice is a question that must be left to someone with a rather more recently published encyclopædia than that available here.

Tropical fruits abound, by the way, among the most highly-prized being the durian, the mangosteen and the mango.

H. F. E.

## La Poésie Moderne—Maybe

MODERN poetry,  
That is, the Poetry  
Of some  
Of our modern poets,  
To me  
Seems just like this.  
But perhaps  
In reality it is  
Much worse.

## So Bad for the Greens, Too

"The honourable mover drew attention regarding Kibera to the fact that provision has been made for the proper administration of this village. I should like to know when this 'proper administration' can be expected, because although murders have become less frequent on Nairobi Golfcourse, the local residents, though admitting that things are a little better, feel that, especially during the week-ends, very much stricter supervision is necessary."—*Nairobi paper*.

## At the Pictures

## SUSPENSE AND VIRTUOSITY

*The Spiral Staircase* (Director: ROBERT SIODMAK) is adapted from a novel by ETHEL LINA WHITE and is typically a girl-in-distress story, with suspense mounting continually in that half-light of which Mr. SIODMAK as director is so fond. Subdued lighting and heavy shadows have a positively depressing effect on some audiences, which demand a continuously bright and glittering screen to keep them cheerful; but anyone with an eye for a picture will be rewarded again and again here with an interesting piece of composition—a diagonal view of some tall railings against a wood, a garden in the rain seen from an upper window, or some shots of the Spiral Staircase, which runs down to a wine-cellar. The action nearly all passes in a large isolated house near a small town in New England in the early nineteen-hundreds, where *Helen* (DOROTHY MCGUIRE) is a kind of companion-help to the bedridden old *Mrs. Warren* (ETHEL BARRYMORE). For the greater part of the film Miss MCGUIRE is not called upon to make a sound, for *Helen* completely lost her voice in childhood as the result of a shock, and it takes a succession of very considerable shocks culminating in her own attempted murder (after several other young ladies have been murdered, two of them very close to where she was at the time) to bring it back. The result is an amount of silence unusual in a murder film, silence which is skilfully used to heighten the suspense. (In fact I think there could usefully have been a little more of it, in place of the rather too abundant background-music.) The solution, to anyone familiar with murder-stories and the conditions governing the behaviour of decaying families in them, is—with the additional clue of the murderer's eye, which is several times shown to us the full size of the screen—not difficult to guess; but this is nothing against a film the strength of which lies in its building up of suspense, in its accumulation of fresh and unexpected detail, and in its emphatic and almost uninterrupted pictorial appeal. I enjoyed it.

*Une Femme Disparaît*, the French picture which is being advertised and shown under the title *A Woman Disappeared* (Director: JACQUES FEYDER), is essentially what might be called a "virtuosity-vehicle," a field-day for FRANÇOISE ROSAY, and is correspond-

ingly weak in structure considered as a whole; but it's full of character and the atmosphere of *place*, and well worth seeing. I got the impression that the audience hardly knew how to take it. We are introduced to a celebrated actress (played by Mme.

ROSAY) and her daughter, and we see a good deal of their life, we grow to understand their difficulties; then their story suddenly stops, we hear that an unknown woman has been found drowned, and we see in flashback three episodes, involving three different women, as they are told to a humane and puzzled police-inspector by people who think they can identify her photograph. Very well—but each of these three women is played by Mme. ROSAY, too. It is a *tour de force*, they are all different women, each one a true character perfectly realized—but the audience finds it hard to believe that this is simply art for art's sake, and tends to wonder whether the fact that they are all played by the same magnificent actress may not be meant to elucidate the story's message. Anyone who happened not to be attending when it was explained to the police-inspector (in a sentence or two) that the three other mysteries had been solved and that the drowned woman was certainly the actress we saw to begin with, is probably still trying to fit all the episodes into the same life.

The longest, and perhaps for that reason the most impressive, is the one about the peasant woman, *Tona*, which is full of first-rate characters, enchanting detail, and magnificent scenery (there is a wonderful scene with the villagers in the valley among the sunlit mountains, harvesting the grapes); but throughout, as in so many French films, such things are almost perfect—the detail is constantly crisp and surprising, a player may make the briefest possible appearance and still leave us with the impression of an established character.

Not a rounded story; but a collection of admirably-made short stories, with four separate brilliant performances by FRANÇOISE ROSAY, continuously entertaining and not to be missed. R. M.



[The Spiral Staircase]

## THE SPIRAL LADY

Helen Capel . . . . . DOROTHY MCGUIRE



[A Woman Disappeared]

## THE VARIOUS LADY

FRANÇOISE ROSAY

"Wedding-dress and bicycle for sale."—*Advt. in "Oxford Times."*  
What about it, Daisy?

## Remedy

ONE has told me of a sure  
Anti-alcoholic cure  
For the devastating lure  
Of the Grape  
And of all fermented juice  
Which is certain to reduce  
E'en the moderate in use  
To the ape.

"Twill compel a man to shrink  
From whatever's good to drink  
And uplift him to the pink  
In such trim  
That a girl with half an eye  
When she sees him passing by  
Will exclaim in rapture "Hi,  
Look at him."

There are persons, well I know  
(Shall I mention So-and-So?)  
Who no doubt will have a go  
At the bait;  
It's of course their own concern  
Though it's possible they'll learn  
That they've got beyond return  
When too late.

But, for me, I draw the line.  
I find virtue in the Vine;  
There is merit, I opine,  
In the Cup;  
I can recommend a nip  
For a victim of the pip,  
And I like a modest sip  
To my sup.

Then at times when one unbends  
In the bosom of one's friends  
Is it lemonade that lends  
To our talk  
That enrichment, full and strong,  
Which can round it to a song?  
No, it isn't, by a long,  
Long chalk.

And, my brothers, when I see  
Men who float their minds in tea  
And reflect how greatly we  
Are the gainers,  
Then—I'm confident that you're  
In agreement—I feel sure  
That there ought to be a cure  
For abstainers. DUM-DUM.

## From a German Farmer

To the Military Government, Oldenburg,  
through Dr. Kolbeck.

TRANSPORT OFFICER!—I herewith  
wish to spread under you the following  
wish: Please let me become an autocar.  
I am a midwife and have very much  
to do. Besides I am very busy in

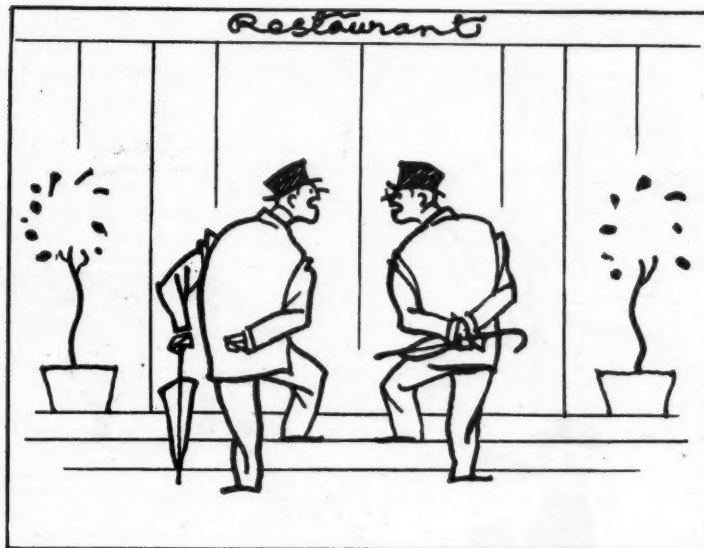
cattle-breeding all over the land, quite  
apart from delivering of household  
articles, also small passages of iron  
twisted off.

I therefore kindly beg you to prolong  
my ES-shine, because otherwise I am

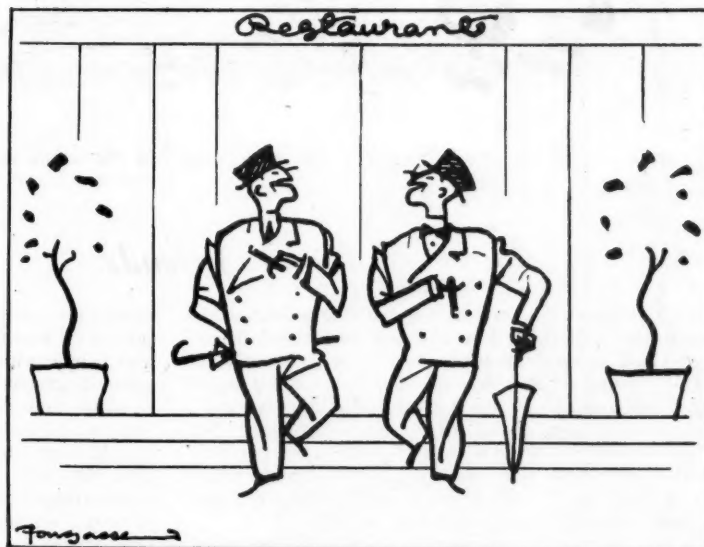
not in a position to fulfill my job.  
Dont bother about benzine. I use a  
mixture composed by myself. So I  
wait for your decision.

Yours respectfully,  
KARL —.

## CHANGING VIEWPOINT

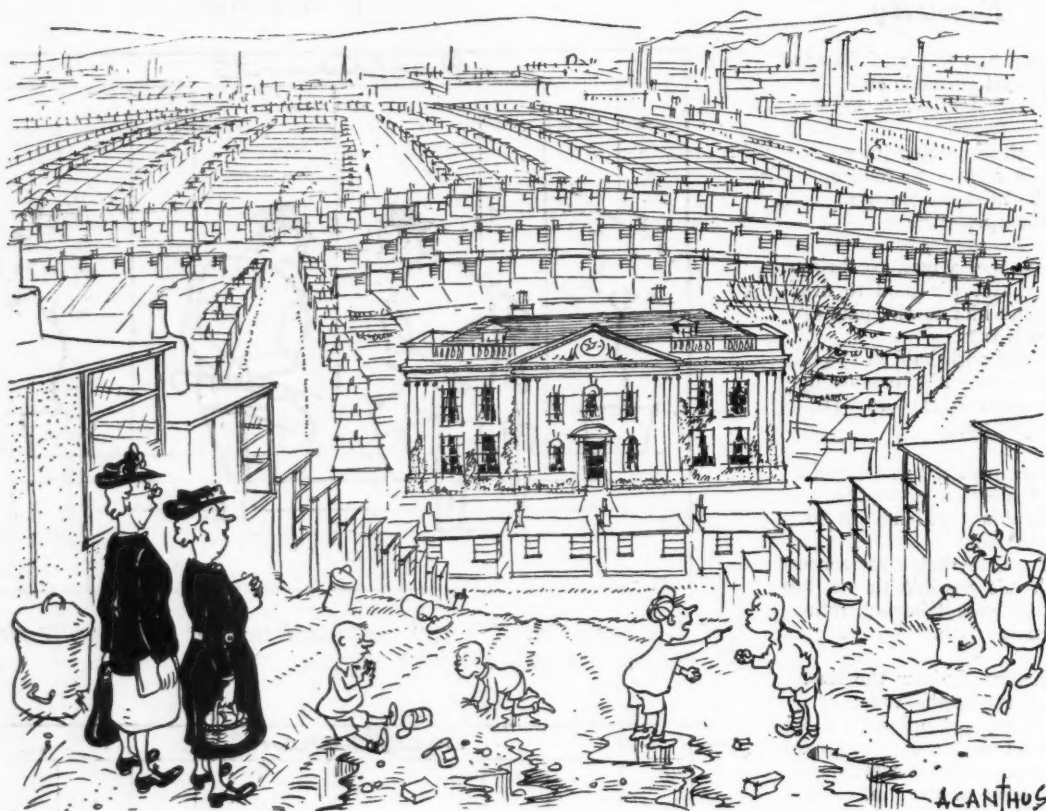


12.50 p.m. "Yes, I understand that our food situation is  
really and truly absolutely desperate . . ."



2.15 p.m. ". . . and that there's not the very slightest  
cause for any anxiety whatever."





*"Yes, it's the only eyesore in the whole new estate."*

## Friends

I COULD lead this article off with a good-hearted sentiment something like the one about old friends being best—exactly like it, in fact, as it is the only one I can call to mind—but I have decided to be coldly logical and to define friends as the opposite of strangers, and I shall start with a few observations about strangers. Not that I am doubting that old friends are best; it is a perfectly true statement which has led to a great many calendars, mostly of dogs, but I don't think I can fit it in anywhere, unless you count all this as fitting it in.

There are an enormous number of strangers in the world. Besides all the ones we never see there are a great many we do see. We see them milling round us in the streets, overlapping on to our half of the bus-seat, filling up the shops, sitting inside their houses (they are difficult to see here except in the evening before they draw the curtains, but there is evidence that strangers sit in their own houses just as much as we do) and generally carrying on as if they had lives of their own. Indeed, not even the most subjective of us really doubts that they do. What most people doubt is that strangers have names, especially Christian names. Psychologists say that you can divide the world into two categories as well as all the other

categories: people who sit in buses trying to guess other people's Christian names from the backs of their necks, and people who sit in buses and don't. No one has ever guessed anyone's Christian name this way, but it is nice to think that the people behind us may be trying to guess ours; and I am sure that if any of my readers ever thought people were they would turn right round and tell them. The only other thing I need say about strangers is that it is as extraordinary to be introduced to a genuine stranger, someone we know intimately from observation, as it is ordinary to be introduced to someone we have never seen before. People we have never seen before and are being introduced to are not strangers because they haven't time to be; during an introduction they enjoy a unique non-status in being just something to smile at.

Now for our friends. These we may divide into best friends, close friends, friends and acquaintances, the last being a wide classification including people we can rely on meeting at certain parties, people we promised to ring up and people who promised to ring us up. The last lot are incomprehensible, unless they have lost the number. Friends include people we knew once and have, as it were, not gone on paying our subscription for, and people we

were at school with and haven't seen since—a special kind, automatically qualified for Christian names, whose main interest is that they must be noticing how we have changed. No one, grammatically, should have more than one best friend, but if my readers will sit down and think how many people they must be the best friend of they will see better than ever how conceited they are. Close friends may be defined as people who do not have to ask each other to dinner so strictly in turn as in ordinary life. They could also be defined as people who do not give back the things they borrow, if people were a bit better at giving back things they borrow from mere acquaintances. As for what happens when one close friend buys something for another and is going to get paid back, I can only say that the paying-back is fraught with chance as well as temperament, being swayed by the availability of small change, by sudden turns in conversation and outside distractions, and that two friends who insist on being businesslike with each other are just as likely to owe each other three and tenpence as any other two people. This is put in to cheer up those of my readers who are not businesslike with their friends.

Now I come to some of the minor but none the less interesting aspects of friendship; for example, the fact that the friends we think we can ask along without making a fuss of, in other words without tidying up the sitting-room, turn out to be nothing of the kind. The trouble is that one thing leads to another. People who start picking up newspapers start noticing the crumbs on the carpet; people who move the sofa to get under it with the carpet-sweeper get interested in the sofa; people who have tucked the sofa back into shape will find it difficult not to fetch a damp cloth to rub the finger-marks off the mantelpiece; and people let loose in that mood with a damp cloth and any quantity of paintwork around them will be lucky if they finish before their friends arrive. All this is why our friends' homes are always so much cleaner and tidier than ours—at least it is nice to think so. As for tidying ourselves up for our friends, much the same thing happens. People start by telling themselves they look all right as they are, and then they get keen. This brings me to a very interesting point about friends—the rule that we only meet them unexpectedly when we are looking scruffy. (Scientists don't explain this. They say we must expect it in a world where the empty call-boxes are the ones that don't work.) The people we meet when we are looking scruffy are, I need hardly say, less often kind understanding friends than the sort of people who have not seen us for a year and will carry with them for the next year the belief that that was the best we could do. Yet another curious aspect of friendship occurs when two friends meet for lunch in a restaurant. One is doomed to arrive after the other, however early both may be, and this calls for a process of apology and forgiveness which is no better for one side than the other, because it means a burst of cheeriness that neither side is yet warmed up to.

Friendship is closely linked with the telephone system; indeed, with the invention of the telephone humanity began to learn a lot of subsidiary facts about its friends, such as the time they got up and went to bed and when they had the meals it wasn't invited to. I do not need to remind my readers of that slight inflection of voice, often a mere scratchiness, which means that they have woken someone up to answer the telephone, or that funny sensation, half-way between guilt and virtue, which warns them that they have got someone out of bed at eleven on a Sunday morning. It is also quite easy to identify our friends' meal-times, even if we cannot actually hear them eating, because there is a well-defined danger period round

our own lunch and dinner time when we might be considered rude if we didn't apologize for interrupting our friends' meals, but more than make up for it if we do. (A belief in our own powers of apology, psychologists say, is one of the factors making friendship what it is.)

I shall end this piece on a sobering note: a reminder that the friends my readers hope can't see them across the street are sometimes hoping the same about my readers. I don't want my readers to worry, but I would ask them to work out their own motives on such occasions—looking scruffy, being late or just sulking—and decide for themselves if their friends are not entitled to be as human as they sometimes suspect their friends think *they* are, without for a moment believing that friends can think anything of the kind.

#### A Friend at Court

"Brought before the Court on a charge of supplying two dresses, a coat and underclothes contrary to Defence Regulations, the Judge directed a verdict of not guilty and the return of the goods."

*Scottish paper.*



"... and when you came out you found your pump, tool-bag and a number of items missing—that right?"



"Now let's see—twenty-six shillings a week at the age of sixty-five, clear."

## The Sound of our Own Voices

**ANNOUNCER.** This morning we have in the studio the distinguished economist Laddie Proglow, who is going to talk to you about exports and such. Mr. Ladgrove.

**Laddie Proglow.** Exports! Let us look at this word "exports" for a moment. What does it mean? Well, can you see anywhere we might try and break it down a little? No? Don't you think it looks just a wee bit weak after that first syllable "ex"? Yes, I am quite sure you do. Now you've done it, haven't you? Instead of the single word "exports" we've now got two smaller words "ex" and "ports," haven't we? We are getting on, aren't we? No, I didn't do it—you did, all by yourselves. I was only trying to help a bit, that's all . . .

**Announcer.** We are interrupting the talk to announce that Joe Pooley's "Swingtars" are performing on the other programme.

**Laddie Proglow.** Well, now that we've got the two wee words "ex" and "ports" instead of the larger word "exports" we can really get down to

the business of finding out what "exports" means or—er—mean. What about "ex"? Ex-haust, ex-periment, ex-treme, ex-plosive, ex-husband. Does that help? Yes, you've got it first time—"ex" means "out of." Experiment, out of a periment; ex-haust, out of a haust, and so on. And exports? Yes, quite right—out of the ports. Well, strictly speaking, etymologically and all that, ha-ha, it's not really "out of the ports"; but, by Jove, it's jolly near the truth, so let's avoid pedantry and leave it at that, eh? Yes, I think we might be forgiven for once if we stretch a point in the interests of clarity.

Right-o. So exports—there's no need for me to break it up any longer, is there?—are things going out of the ports, out of the ports. Actually, I see no reason why we shouldn't call them "things going out of the ports" throughout this talk; after all we're not trying to be real economists, are we? So why use their lingo? Now the Government have repeatedly told us that things going out of the ports are vital to our economic stabil—oh,

I'm sorry, I really *am*. I should have said "vital to our very existence." "Things out of the ports or die," they say. And how do we pay for "things going out of the ports"? Think. Take your time; I'd much rather you got it yourselves. Well? Any ideas? Yes, I knew you'd have it this time—we pay for "things going out of the ports" with "imports" or "inports" . . . "in," "in," "in." But I suppose we'd better call them "things coming into the ports," hadn't we?

Well, now, if things coming into the ports are greater in value than things going out of the ports the country is said to have an adverse trade balance. I've tried very hard to find an easier way of putting that but I can't—I'm sorry. So we'll have to leave it. I don't think it will matter much, anyway . . .

**Announcer.** You have been listening to Mr. Prollie Gadlove talking about exports and such. We must apologize to listeners for a break in transmission between "ex" and "ports."

(B.B.C. Recording)

HOD.





### THE THREE CHARMERS

"Let the tune be harmonious, but austere."

## Impressions of Parliament

### Business Done

**Monday, February 18th.**—House of Commons: Many Announcements.

**Tuesday, February 19th.**—House of Lords: Avuncular Interlude: Starring Lord A. and Lord B.

House of Commons: Statement on India.

**Wednesday, February 20th, and Thursday, February 21st.**—House of Commons: Foreign Affairs are Discussed.

**Monday, February 18th.**—When things do move in the House of Commons, they do move. More than once, of late, Mr. Speaker CLIFTON BROWN has brought to the notice of the House the plain, indubitable and immutable fact that M.P.s (like ordinary mortals) can either ask many supplementary questions but few main questions, or many main questions and few supplementaries. From time immemorial it has been the aim of every Back-Bench M.P. to do both. Every Member wants his daily ration of three questions "on the paper" and a great many, in addition, "off the coupon."

So, having no time under the counter, so to say, Mr. Speaker has been cutting down the ration of supplementaries. The result, to-day, was striking—and, for some Ministers, disconcerting.

There were ninety-seven questions on the paper, all to be asked and answered in a little under sixty minutes. And, amid cheers, the last question on the paper was successfully reached.

Mr. HECTOR MCNEILL, the Under-secretary for Foreign Affairs, clearly not expecting that his question (there was but one) would be reached, had lingered outside, and was received with ironical cheers when he made a delayed-action appearance. Dr. EDITH SUMMER-SKILL, of the Food Ministry, on the other hand, skipped up to the Table with such a rush to answer question No. 97 that she did not notice that the questioner was absent, and that, therefore, her efforts were love's labour lost. However, she seemed to take personally some of the cheers meant for Mr. Speaker, so all was well.

The House was in an inquiring mood, and it was given a great many odd bits of information. For instance:

Victory Day will be celebrated on Saturday, June 8th, but it will be an austerity celebration. (*Information kindly supplied by the Prime Minister.*)

Clothes ration coupons now current will have to last all the time they were meant to, but there will be half a dozen more in the next period. After

that, all being well, we shall have as many as fifty-two a year. (*This from Sir Stafford "Austerity" Cripps.*)

There will be as many fly-papers this year as last. (*Also from Sir Stafford.*)

The House then passed to a long (and, oh! so technical) discussion on what used to be called Workmen's Compensation, but is now called Industrial Injury Insurance. The change of name did not seem to make the law any clearer or the technicalities any less technical. However, quite a bit of the Bill was passed before rising time.

**Tuesday, February 19th.**—The House of Lords has come to regard Lord

that ne'er the twain should meet—that, in fact, they were inconsistent and mutually repellent. With tears in his voice (it may of course have been the cough) he pleaded with the Government to do something about it; he did not say precisely what.

Lord ADDISON, Leader of the House, whose attitude towards Lord BEAVERBROOK is always that of a tolerant and reassuring, if slightly surprised, uncle (with a touch of the doctor added), said he did not see how Lord B. worked it all out, agreed that it was a terrifying picture, but assured him that he need have no fears. It would, he said, soothingly, be quite all right—absolutely quite all right—there, there . . .

One almost expected to see Lord B. lulled off to sleep, so perfect was Lord A.'s bedside manner. However, as soon as Lord A. sat down Lord B. was up again, banteringly forecasting the worst and (while refusing resolutely to be consoled) good-humouredly withdrawing his motion—"as usual."

All good, clean, innocent fun.

In the Lords, Lord PETHICK-LAWRENCE, Secretary for India, and in the Commons the Prime Minister announced that Three Wise Men of the Cabinet (Lord PETHICK-LAWRENCE, Sir STAFFORD CRIPPS and Mr. A. V. ALEXANDER) were off to India to help the people of that distressed part of the Empire to work out a self-government plan of their own. In both Houses the proposal was well received.

**Wednesday, February 20th.**—Mrs. AYRTON-GOULD gave the House a party (social, not political) atmosphere to-day, by producing—rather like a conjurer—an orange and a lemon. These she flourished before the astonished eyes of the Minister of Food, Sir BEN SMITH, and the envious eyes of the rest of the House.

It appeared that they had been purchased, at great cost, from a hawker's barrow in the West End of London. She complained that this was all wrong, and that, since the shops were short of supplies, the barrows ought not to have seemingly unlimited quantities off the ration, especially at Black Market prices.

"The thing to do," answered Sir BEN severely, "is to tell the police."

"I did," said Mrs. AYRTON-GOULD, "and they said it was a matter for your enforcement officer."

Precisely what the Bells of St. Clement's said after that was drowned in the peal of laughter. But "Big Ben" looked very much put out.

Mr. HAROLD MACMILLAN then opened a debate on foreign affairs with an excellently-worded and well-delivered speech, in which, in a remarkably



THE CHEF

(After Orpen)

"I have never heard anyone say that British cooking is the best in the world."

Lord Samuel.

BEAVERBROOK'S Tuesday recitals as something of an institution, and there was general regret when it became known that his lordship had a cold and might not appear. He had down a motion about his two pet subjects—The Empire and the Bretton Woods Monetary Plan.

But it takes more than a mere common cold to keep Lord B. out of the arena when those two subjects have to be fought over, and, sure enough, he turned up in his place, fortified by an outsized handkerchief and an envelope full of cough lozenges. With these and a wad of notes he proceeded to attack the B.W.M.P. and to defend the Empire. Before the very eyes of the House he tried to prove



"Tell the children not to make so much noise, dear—I can hardly hear myself write."

short time, he contrived to survey the world's problems. Speaking of the work of the Security Council, he coined this phrase: "We do not want this to be the age of open diplomacy and secret fears."

The debate then became free for all, with Mr. NOEL-BAKER as the chief Government spokesman. Mr. ERNEST BEVIN, the Foreign Secretary, was held in reserve for the following day.

Thursday, February 21st.—When the time came for Mr. BEVIN to reply to the debate to-day it was clear that he had not only taken in all that had been said, but that he had a good deal to say on his own account.

Mr. EDEN, who preceded him, pleaded for closer co-operation between Britain, the U.S.A. and Soviet Russia—a sentiment that evidently had the approval of Mr. JOHN WINANT, the U.S. Ambassador, and Mr. GUSEV, the Soviet Ambassador, sitting in the Diplomatic Gallery. But, said Mr. EDEN, Russia could not merely say the abracadabra of friendship and then go her own way, regardless of the feelings of the other two.

This view was warmly endorsed by Mr. BEVIN, who said quite bluntly that

he wanted friendship with Russia—but not at any price. This sentiment gained some Conservative cheers—but no noticeable enthusiasm from some of the benches behind the Minister. However, the Foreign Secretary, who had pounded the table of the Security Council to some effect the previous week, applied the same treatment to the Dispatch Box on the Table of the House, and left nobody in any doubt about his determination and policy.

And thus the debate faded into one on the situation in Palestine. This subject being *sub judice*, there was an unfinished atmosphere about the discussion.

### Things Alone

#### VI

SOME time ago a tiny key unlocked doors for curiosity. However, once it came about, that by mistake it locked itself out. As this was not its true intention, it asserted that locks were a stupid invention.

#### VII

A telephone once rang its number, and woke itself from deepest slumber. It seemed at first a bit surprised but later on soliloquized as it did not get a reply it soon rang off without good-bye.

#### VIII

"I think," said the broom, "I'll sweep the room."  
"If you must," said the dust to the broom, and settled somewhere else in the room.

#### IX

A line once met another line and said "Well, this is very fine. Now that at last you have met me, we must have reached infinity." The other said "Oh, this is hell. We never have been parallel."

#### X

An interval once said "I come between what's gone before and what will yet be seen. It matters not how long I stay I am condemned to miss the play."



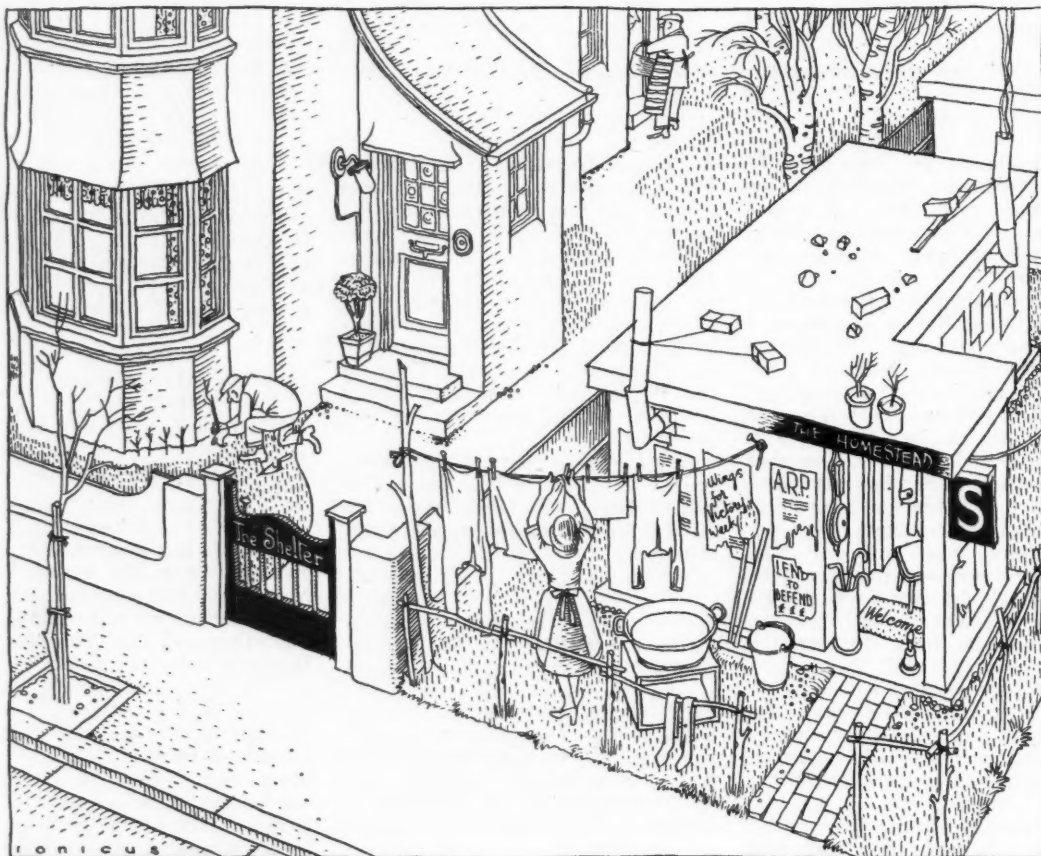
## Topsy Turvy

XX

**T**RIX darling that *garrulous* Uno has departed at last and now perhaps we may have a little *peace*, my dear not a *moment* too soon one gathers because Haddock says the *next* thing was to be *Patagonia* presenting a letter from *Brazil* protesting about there being Russian troops in *Bornholm* which belongs to my delicious *Danes*, by the way darling I don't suppose you could care *much* less but why all this *incessant* twitter about *Indonesia*, in the old days there used to be an island called *Java* because we nearly went there from *Ceylon* and didn't they grow *jellies* there or was it *chutney*, and *Java* it seems is what they nearly always mean by *Indonesia*, anyhow that's the place where *Surabaya* is because I've just *hunted* it down in my *bijou* Atlas, but why *Indonesia* always, because I've looked *that* up in the *Encyclopædia* which my dear is *so* flattening because

it's *quite* always the *wrong* volume and nothing of the flimsiest interest is ever *mentioned*, however *estimate* my astonishment it says that *Indonesia* means *eight* different areas, from *Madagascar* to *Borneo* and the *Philippines*, so you *might* think from the papers that our *ubiquitous* troops were fighting in *Madagascar* which is *French* or bombarding the *Philippines* which is *Yankland's*, too ambiguous, well then I looked up little *Java* where it says the people are the *Javanese* "proper" the *Sudanese* and the *Madurese*, my dear not one *word* about *Indonesians*, Oh and it says that *Java* was first mentioned in the *thirteenth* century, which if so *why* must we have the longest new name for it *now*, honestly my dear as if there wasn't enough *natural* chaos in the news, to mislead and mystify with *synthetic* hares of that sort should definitely be the undone thing, and *Indonesia* Haddock says

means *Indian Islands* which of course makes the entire fuddlery *too* clear you *must* agree, Haddock by the way has internal umbrage because he's *always* said he's the *one* man of letters who's swum from *Waterloo Bridge* to *Westminster*, but now he's discovered that *Byron* swam from *Lambeth Bridge* to *Blackfriars*, so he's merely counting the days till he can swim from *Vauxhall* to *Southwark*, my dear these *men*, I only hope he doesn't start laughing and *sink* like he did last time and *all* but drowned off *Cleopatra's Needle*, have you noticed that my dear, no I remember you were never a *convincing* nymph in the water, but personally if I laugh in it I go to the bottom like a shiny little *stone*, meanwhile we're an absolute hive of *Movements*, not content with *Liberate Bornholm*, about which we're giving a *Foodless Dinner* with *No Speeches*, my dear I think it's *such* a sanitary notion don't you,



because honestly how few the Movements which have not been practically wrecked by a Lunch or Dinner in aid of, one's pinned down between some unelectric stranger in charm-group 53 and some poor sweet who's doomed for a speech, mutters vacantly whatever you say and can't pass the mustard without intimidation, the feeding takes so long there's no time for even one sufferable speech, there are always exactly three times too many with as a rule at least two shockers, and no hope of slipping out for a wash, meanwhile in these days one drinks toast after toast with nothing in the glass which I think is so barbarous and Haddock says is too likely to set up a lasting frustration-canker in the sub-conscious, well as the hours pass one develops a slow but smouldering antagonism to the Cause whatever it is, my dear I remember years ago going to an Anti-Noise dinner which Haddock was entangled in, and at the end of it I merely ached for noise, I was starving for noise, my dear I went out into the street with Haddock and shouted, he thought I was dehinged, I sang in the Tube and safe home I turned on the wireless put on a record and played the piano until my dear forcibly restrained by Haddock, so that will give you a kind of clue to what I mean, well my dear you remember the preliminary stages of a public meal, when everybody's just arrived too bright and bonhomous, the frock fits, the face-work is intact, a little juniper-juice is available, one meets an ancient bosom or apprehends a new, if one is introduced to the unelectric or submagnetic type one can slide away shortly, and for a brief space one is practically content to be among one's fellow-creatures, but then comes the lowering moment when they say Dinner is served, at that moment one finds one has no hanky, Haddock comes back from the eating-map and says he's sitting about a quarter-of-a-mile away, and I am between the only two incurably septic men he knows, the starboard shoulder-strap carries away, and one rather wants to be slightly sick, well darling the plan is that at that moment we don't go into dinner after all, in fact it's not settled utterly but I rather think we shall have it announced, Dinner will not be served, because I do so love to give happiness and see it happen, and I can just envisage the wave of radiance going over the faces when they realize they've not got to sit through a festering dinner or suffer a single debilitating speech, they can trickle away to the club when ready or have a cosy sardine over the fire in the home, meanwhile of course the juniper-juice



"I wonder who started this scare about dried-egg poisoning?"

will circulate briskly and one will wander about and whisper Bornholm, I can't think of a better technique for keeping a Cause warm and fragrant in the mind can you, of course you may say it's only a cocktail-party disguised but personally I see the most esoteric difference, for one thing it has the element of surprise, and then of course one will wear one's pretties and you'll have the dignity of the one and the brevity of the other, then of course I'm too concerned about Haddock's Beacon Movement, my dear you remember or don't you the Belisha Beacons, which however mocked were a meritorious notion and the one thing that gives a pedestrian any hope of a future, because as long as he gives reasonable notice it's not the done thing to mow him down between the studs, in fact the motors are supposed to slow and let him over, nor darling does it matter one hoot, as you'd better tell your Henry in case he brings the car which I do not advise the streets being quite impassable and insanitary with car-purloiners, where was I, Oh yes it does not signify if the orange blob is absent through blitzing because they made a special law in the war, but my dear as Haddock says does a single driver know all this, or if he does could he conceivably care less, too often he says when making a stately passage through the studs he's merely blown off by the rudest hoots and has to leap a cubitt or two to escape some rocketing vehicle, on one occasion quite splitting the gastrocnemious muscle and he was a

cripple for weeks, and of course the town is full of the most alarming demobbed drivers who still feel they're in charge of tanks or ten-ton lorries, and as for pedestrians they might just as well be Belgians, my dear Haddock was in one bus which quite evidently the driver thought was getting ammunition up to Arnhem under fire, roaring round the corners on two wheels, up-rooting lamp-posts and scaring half Chelsea into their basements, well Haddock says the police can do nothing being far too few and the one thing is for the citizen to act and educate, because apart from the drivers he says there is not one doe-pedestrian who dares to exercise her rights, they merely huddle on the pavement in the usual way until there are no cars visible when they scuttle across like frightened serfs, so my dear he meanders round the town solemnly crossing all the Belishas he can find, noting the behaviour and making indignant gestures if the vehicles swoop on impervious as they nearly always do, my dear one day I know he'll lose a hindleg or worse, well then he yells after the ruffian like a mad thing, and if he stops which they sometimes do they have the most carbolie altercation, too fruitless because most of them have not the faintest what H. is talking about and if they do they say it's nonsense because of course the mere conception of any vehicle slowing down for a mere foot-serf is against nature to most of them, however that's the Movement, Haddock says if he does die on the King's High Way which is a safish bet at least he'll have perished for the people, and now he's made a new Will to say he's to be cremated and the ashes scattered over the driver who kills him excuse the macabre note darling, no more now Topsy.

A. P. H.

## Nw Lse of Lfe

D MBLZN  
Dpls emncptn,  
Wth its mln  
Jbs fr the rhlbltd cvln.

The prspct of a nw strt  
Wms my hrt.

Frm my frmr emplymt  
I drvd nglgble enjymt,  
And evn if I hve to strve nxt wntn  
I wl nvr agn beme a prntr.

Yngr and knr lds  
Cn mck abt wth the sml ads.

J. B. B.

## At the Play

### "OTHELLO" (WINTER GARDEN)

WHEN Pepys went to see *Othello* he thought he had something worth recording when he wrote in his diary: "11th October (1660). To the Cockpit to see *The Moore of Venice*, which was well done. Burt acted the Moore; by the same token, a very pretty lady that sat by me, called out, to see *Desdemona* smothered." But I think I have something on Pepys. A girl sitting somewhere behind me, who sounded as if her parents had spent a lot of money on having her taught to play hockey, fluted happily in the first interval: "It's good, isn't it? I've never heard of it before." The forward march of education cannot but give us great encouragement.

MR. DONALD WOLFIT is not so successful with the Moor as he has been with other Shakespearean characters. He starts with disadvantages both of physique and temperament. Neither his figure nor his voice suggest the heroic man of action; he has dignity in great measure, but it is the dignity of intellectual repose rather than of martial authority. He speaks very well, but as a statesman might speak, not a soldier. When *Othello* overtakes *Desdemona* at Cyprus it would be easier to believe that he has come from the Chair of a peace conference than that he has again shown himself the victor in battle. He is at his best in the long scenes in which his doubts are first stirred up by *Iago*. Their discovery is admirably gradual. The opening speech of pleading before the *Duke* is also well taken. *Desdemona's* murder is a little tame. Some of the classic *Othellos*, notably Salvini, may have over-played it, but it is after all the work of a muscular madman, and to apply the pillow as if it were merely a pad of anæsthetic is not sufficient. A scenic arrangement which makes the bed remote from the audience is not helpful, and *Desdemona* might be expected to put up a stouter resistance than she does.

Mr. ANTHONY EUSTREL's *Iago* is

good. The measure of his performance is that we are fascinated by the compelling urge of *Iago's* villainy, even if we ask ourselves afterwards, as so many audiences have done, why such a black heart had not revealed itself sooner in the public service. It is a well-disciplined piece of acting, in which the delicate adjustments of balance are expertly made as *Iago's* monstrous campaign is pressed home. The early *Desdemona* is presented capably enough by Miss ROSALIND IDEN, but once her world collapses Miss IDEN fails to give more than

absurdity is impregnated with a fearful sadness which catches you unawares by the boots. They may be more surprised to learn that as it develops it becomes, like the weather reports for southern England, duller in spite of bright intervals.

MR. SAROYAN seems to have said to himself: "This world is one hell of a madhouse. Let us see if we can't corner a little sanity in its last hideout, kindness." And to this end he takes us to a bar in San Francisco, a low-down honky-tonk. There we find *Joe*, a rich young man who sits liquidating

his life in controlled despair, sharing his champagne with anyone within reach, while his companion, a giant in the *Mice and Men* vein but without mouse-fondling propensities, goes out to buy him toys and anything else which might distract him for five minutes. There is an unemployable comedian tirelessly practising unmarketable dances, a love-sick youth bawling hysterically into the public telephone, a man who plays desperately with the pin-table all through the evening, an ancient Arab far gone in private yoga and, besides a lot of other oddities, a young prostitute whom the giant wants to marry and *Joe* is trying to help. Sometimes all these phenomena are in evidence at once, at others they recede into corners, of which a honky-tonk has plenty, to leave one party in possession of the floor. The result is a chaotic merging of a number of short stories, but it is a chaos made almost coherent by the recurring note of hopelessness and the conviction that tolerance is the saving grace. It is witty and often funny. The trouble is, it has no shape and might as well go on for ever, when in fact the game is up long before the end.

MR. WALTER CRISHAM is obviously a winner as *Joe*, and as *Nick*, the benevolent proprietor who largely conducts the proceedings, Mr. FREDERICK VALK gives a first-rate performance. It would be invidious to mention others from a long and creditable list, except perhaps the anonymous old soak whose totterings have a lyric quality all their own.

ERIC.



WHERE LOAFERS, HOOVERS AND STOOGES CONGREGATE.

Nick (owner of saloon) . . . . . MR. FREDERICK VALK  
Kitty Duval . . . . . MISS MARGARET JOHNSTON  
Joe . . . . . MR. WALTER CRISHAM

conventional indications of her grief. Of the minor characters Miss PATRICIA JESSEL's *Emilia* is the best, a spirited and intelligent rendering.

This is a disappointing production, but Mr. WOLFIT has chosen to begin his season at the hardest end. It will include *Lear*, *The Merry Wives*, *Hamlet*, *Twelfth Night*, *The Merchant of Venice* and *Cymbeline*.

ERIC.

"THE TIME OF YOUR LIFE" (LYRIC, HAMMERSMITH)

Readers of Mr. WILLIAM SAROYAN's pyrotechnical works will not be surprised to hear that this play, brilliant and enigmatic by turns, is a highly irregular excursion. Or that its



## Report on Housing

FOR some time now one of London's evening newspapers has been conducting a most interesting inquiry into the progress of the building operations. An enterprising cameraman takes shots at regular intervals of a new housing site and offers his readers a precise record of the activities of the men employed. We have been conducted through the clearing and levelling operations and are now inspecting the first peg-and-string geometry for the foundations of the scheduled maisonnettes.

It is all frightfully interesting, especially so for me, for I think I have seen something in those photographs that has escaped the ordinary reader. It is the set expression on the face of one of the workmen—a labourer, I think. For sheer malevolence I have seen nothing like it since I last stood umpire in a village match. And I understand that labourer's feelings. Put yourself in his place. How would *you* like to have some busybody snooping about making indestructible records of your labours? How would that photographer like it?

It is not so bad for office-workers like me. The head snooper, if that term is not too disrespectful, can make no estimate of my zeal from a quick snapshot of my desk. I take good care to keep my trays piled high with documents and my pen fixed firmly behind my ear. And I smoke. Nothing, I believe, lends more substance to one's claims to be overworked and overworking than a room filled with smoke. The denser the fumes, the more impenetrable the fog over the "out"-basket, the more certain does it appear to the visitor or snooper that you have (1) never left the office all day (or all night), (2) just completed a batch of most important interviews, and (3) secured the goodwill of local tobacconists.

I have experimented with a number of tobaccos. With some of the cheaper brands the smoke becomes stale so quickly that it is unsafe to slip out for more than half an hour at a stretch (a quick hair-cut, say). But there are other noble brands—and I wish I could be generous enough to divulge their names—which emit fumes so rich and lasting that they are as fresh at 10.30 A.M. as at 5.0 P.M. the previous day. I need not explain the advantage of this.

I wonder whether other typists understand the system regulating their principals' generosity in the

matter of cigarettes. Miss Martyns knows instinctively when to expect my benefactions. She gets one first thing every morning when four lungs are better than two to freshen up the ageing pall of smoke; she gets one at about 4.30 P.M. when we are stoking up for the night; and she gets others if and when the density falls below the safety limit.

Oh, there are a hundred little devices and stratagems the intelligent office-worker can adopt to secure himself against the snooper. I have said nothing here about the intricate psychology of the waste-paper basket

and the telephone. But the outside worker has my sympathy, especially if these ordinary routine inspections are to be supplemented by photographic publicity. It will be very interesting to see what happens to this newspaper cameraman. Remembering the look on the labourer's face I should not be surprised to see the tormentor in the headlines quite soon. Hod.

### Good News for Housewives

"Week-end weather prospects are 'a little warmer with only a slight chance of heavy frosts,' meal-times."—*Manchester paper.*



*"I sent the same suggestion to the old League of Nations, but they didn't reply either."*



"And it's my belief that if you dropped a magnetic mine at the Magnetic Pole it would come up again."

### Our Booking-Office

(By Mr. Punch's Staff of Learned Clerks)

#### The Moor

MR. GRANVILLE-BARKER, continuing his prefaces to Shakespeare, has given a whole book to *Othello* (SIDGWICK AND JACKSON, 15/-) as he did to *Hamlet*. He explains this by the fact that he writes primarily for students, and finds himself becoming more technical as he goes on. His practical experience as actor, dramatist, and producer has given him an advantage denied to other writers, and his "Preface" should become the authoritative text-book on the subject. In the main, though he touches on the poetry, he treats the play as a play. He goes through it step by step, and through some of the greater scenes almost word by word. Here perhaps he leaves too little to inspiration. Was Shakespeare so icily deliberate? He was not above a large carelessness, and in *Othello* the time factor has kept everybody guessing. Characters and characterization are dealt with thoroughly and admirably. The unsatisfying thing about the tragedy is that the whole trouble arises from *Othello* (call him noble as much as you like) being such a fool. MR. GRANVILLE-BARKER does not lay on the white-wash; what he does is to emphasize *Othello's* recovery. Though not intended for light reading, the book contains much of general interest. Particularly to be recommended is an early section in which we see Shakespeare the playwright turning the original story into a play. This is wisely put at the beginning; it has a leavening effect all through. But what a pity that *Othello* was such "a ass, a idiot."

J. K.

#### On History

In *History and the Reader* (CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2/6), a lecture delivered to the National Book League, Professor G. M. TREVELYAN expounds with his accustomed

lucidity and charm his view of history as "the cement that holds together all the studies relating to the nature and achievements of man." In 1903, he tells us, Professor Bury, his predecessor in the Chair of History at Cambridge, laid down that history was "a science, no more and no less." There were three reasons, Professor TREVELYAN says, why "literary history" was condemned in the universities at this time. In the first place, history was beginning to rival classics, and the history school had therefore to be presented as a tough intellectual training, with deserts like "Stubbs' Constitutional History" to be traversed before the goal of high honours could be attained. Secondly, German scholarship was in the ascendant, and our universities had set up "the crabbed German ideal of the learned man who has nothing to do with literature." And thirdly, the immense prestige achieved by the physical sciences led many historians to believe that the importance of history would be greatly enhanced if it were called a science. Hence Professor Bury's dictum, against which Professor TREVELYAN set himself from the first, and his final condemnation of which is summarized in this address. The motive of history, he says, is at bottom poetic; it enlarges the mind and imagination, otherwise imprisoned in the present, and thus lessens the universal tendency to over-simplify the tangled skein of human affairs. H. K.

#### Lyre With Two Strings

An objective theme, even a time-honoured one, is a godsend to a young poet. For it is the tendency of youth to spin more from its entrails than it has time to attach to the available *points d'appui* in the rafters. That, perhaps, is why Mr. PATRIC DICKINSON's *Poems* strike one as a little loose in texture compared to *Theseus* and the *Minotaur* (CAPE, 5/-), the broadcast play with which his first volume incorporates them. The *Theseus* drama has admirably restated a classic theme in contemporary accents. Not that Mr. DICKINSON's versification is much more revolutionary than Matthew Arnold's. What is both original and moving is the poet's attitude towards the *Minotaur*; towards the Athenian tribute of innocent youth; towards Ariadne, the far-sighted rebel against use-and-wont; and towards a forthright *Theseus*, the man of action who "can only act." Throughout the lyrics the most exciting clues are two: time *versus* eternity, and God *versus* what the writer calls love. Possibly a poet who recognizes time as a rehearsal for eternity and God and love as one actor doubling two parts has a metaphysical pull over his less accommodating successors—even when his speculations are as humbly embodied as in Milton's "On Time. To be set on a clock-case."

H. P. E.

#### Sir Robert Craigie and Japan

SIR ROBERT CRAIGIE arrived in Japan as British Ambassador in September 1937, and left in July 1942, after seven months of confinement, following on the sudden Japanese attack on Britain and the United States. *Behind the Japanese Mask* (HUTCHINSON, 21/-) is his record of this critical period which, inasmuch as it saw the destruction of all his efforts on behalf of a peaceful accommodation with Japan, might have been expected to cause a strong revulsion from his originally sympathetic attitude towards the Japanese. Yet although he never felt in such close contact with the Japanese as with the Chinese, and in spite of the evidence of political duplicity and military cruelty forced upon him during these years, his final conclusion is that the Japanese nation possesses "fundamental qualities of kindness, courage, loyalty and self-abnegation which

should offer a good basis on which to build the new Japan." Whether this is too sanguine a view the future will show, but there is certainly not much in Sir ROBERT CRAIGIE's very interesting review of Japanese policy in the decade before Pearl Harbour to kindle confidence in the good intentions of the Japanese or even in their possession of enough political sense to avoid enterprises which it is small comfort to the victims to see ending in disaster to the Japanese themselves. Probably the chief feeling inspired in the reader of this book will be one of profound relief that the Japanese did not wait for a more reliable partner than Hitler before falling on Britain and the United States.

H. K.

### Howard of Letchworth

Although eleven million more people have swollen the population of this island since EBENEZER HOWARD wrote *Garden Cities of To-morrow* (FABER, 6/-), only his own Letchworth and Welwyn have arisen to dispose of the urban-minded otherwise than in dormitory suburbs. There are two ways of looking at towns. One is the original idea—lately stressed by Sir Patrick Abercrombie—"that they should be no more than the nodal points in a general pattern of national existence." The other, emphasized by Mr. Lewis Mumford in a prelude to HOWARD's book, is that the industrial town represents civilization; and that all man requires is a nice clean factory lay-out, with domestic and cultural accretions, surrounded by a green belt. A more intelligent variant of this contemporary aspiration is precisely what HOWARD—"an elderly nobody" with humane ideals, common-sense, and a vast, steady aptitude for work—suggested in 1898. The Fabians disliked HOWARD: perhaps because he said he would not have national affairs handed over to working men until he saw them using their own savings more creditably. What he did himself, whence he derived his inspiration, and how he imparted it, you can read in his own book—a notable monument to the days when planning was not political, and opportunity, not inhibition, the Englishman's birthright.

H. P. E.

### Forms and Faces

Probably Mr. CLIFFORD BAX compiled his short study, *The Beauty of Women* (MULLER, 10/6), chiefly for his own pleasure, but we may be grateful to him, because the book is packed with pleasantries, lore, anecdote, quotation and infinite variety. He begins with the early Egyptians, who wore garments for pride, not modesty, and whose parlour-maids had nothing but a loose girdle "probably like the Victorian apron or cap, a sign of service." He goes on to the Greeks, whose mothers prayed above all things that their children might be beautiful, and then to the Romans, before describing the charms and foibles of Mediaeval and Renaissance women. Here a recipe for producing "golden-thread" hair—"two pounds of alum, six ounces of black sulphur and four ounces of honey"—may interest modern bee-keepers. In England cleanliness (of a sort) came in with the Stuarts when scented baths became fashionable. During the Regency, Parisian beauties bathed in milk which was then sold to dairymen. The author avoids monotony with the greatest skill. His descriptions (aided by photographs of statues and paintings) of celebrated beauties show how conveniently fashion applauded Nature and Nature submitted to whim, as when noses rose undauntedly and waists followed the upward line. With the passing of the Victorian era, he thinks "a brown blight

of beauty-hatred and British vulgarity settled ponderously upon these islands." Perhaps because he feels it has not yet dispersed, Mr. BAX ends as he does: "True sense of beauty may proclaim the nobility of almost forgotten 'souls'."

B. E. B.

### Holy Deadlock

*Ship to Shore* (FABER, 10/6) is primarily a novel of character. It has action, too, and in plenty, but Mr. WILLIAM MCFEE's first interest is to explore the behaviour of a few people brought together within a simple plot. The exploration is delicate and masterly. Sylvester is the British captain of a famous cruise liner operating from the States, married to a woman he rarely sees to whom the possession of twelve small houses in a suburb of Liverpool is almost the whole of life. He is a solid, steady fellow, but he falls in love with one of his passengers, a Jewish telephone operator, and they live together when he is ashore, his wife refusing a divorce because she cannot believe such an alliance to be permanent. Nothing, however, could be more lasting than the relationship between these two, and only tragedy, to which the story finally moves, can close it. Rosita, a real daughter of New York, is beautifully drawn, tough, witty, uneducated but quick with unspoiled instinct; and Sylvester, whose calm acceptance of a situation foreign to his nature has a splendid inevitability about it, is also subtly portrayed. So are the two others in the foreground, the editor who is their best friend and Sylvester's wife. One of the best things in this fine novel is the account of her dazed expedition to New York, from which she hurriedly returns, with her husband's ashes in a neat packet, to pronounce a solemn adverse verdict on America to her eleven awestruck neighbours. It is very difficult to convey the sympathetic quality of Mr. MCFEE's writing, but that he is a novelist to be reckoned with is beyond question.

E. O. D. K.

### Ancient Law

*Legal Fictions* (STEVENS, 6/-), by A. LAURENCE POLAK, recounts some imaginary litigation on classical subjects for the benefit of law students who are intended to assimilate the principles of law, in a pill plentifully sugared with humour. It may also inspire budding lawyers with an interest in the classics which they did not experience at school. The first report is of a divorce case "*Amphitryon v. Amphitryon and Jupiter*," the co-respondent being President of the independent State of Olympus, who had for some years past indulged in the art of impersonation. As to this, evidence is given by a certain Mr. Mercury, who had taken the oath by the sacrifice of a bull and the catching of its blood in a saucer in open court. In support of Mr. Mercury's testimony, "Miss Leda, an eminent ornithologist, has deposed to her encounter with the co-respondent in the form of a swan; Miss Europa, who is well-known as a stockbreeder, has described how she found him masquerading as a bull. Of the details of their acquaintance with the co-respondent, the less said the better; it is no part of my duty to utter strictures upon the conduct of independent sovereigns, but I feel bound to say that such conduct constitutes a grave reflection not only upon the co-respondent's standard of morality but also upon his mental condition." There is an interesting decision as to whether an animal like Cerberus with three heads could possibly be called a dog; but perhaps the most ingenious of all the cases is "*Minos v. Theseus*." However, each of the ten reports is well worth reading and should not be beyond the comprehension of any layman. Miss DIANA PULLINGER contributes some sprightly illustrations.

E. S. P. H.





*"I'm sorry, sir; we woke late—the baby overslept."*

## Ye Olde Manne

By Smith Minor

**I** GENERALLY write about (a) me, (b) Green, or (c) both, but one day Green said that if I wanted to get anywhere\* I ought to write more about other poeple.

"Why?" I said.

"Becorse the time will come," he said, "when you will be expectted to blosem forth into a full-blone novelist, and a novel about only you and me wuold make the reader burst into tears."

"I'm not so sure," I said, "me if you like, but I think they cuold stand a lot about you."

"Beleive me, you give them alreddy as much as they can stand," he said.

"Well, I sometimes write about my aunt," I said, "I cuold bring her in, and also her parrot."

\*Wich I do. *Author.*

"Do you realy think that a long book about you and me and your aunt and a parrot wuold sell?" he said. "You might sell two copies to very kind poeple, but even they wuold be brought back. No, young Smith,

"If to become a Shaw you hope You simply must encrease your skope."

To wich I said,

"God wot, of Fame I seek my fill, And so, old boy, perhaps I will."

Note. You may be surprised at the "God wot," I was, but when we talk in poetry we've made it a rule we mustn't stop and think, so of corse we never know what's coming. End of note.

Well, anyway, then I said, "Yes, but how do you encrease your skope?"

"One way wuold be to intervue poeple," said Green.

"Mon chapeaux, that's a wheaze," I said, "only where dose one find the poeple?"

"I supose one goes out and looks for them," he said, "but you're the auther, young Smith, not me."

Well, I thort about it, and when the next time came that I had to write an article, i.e., this one, I decided to try it and see if it worked, and if you go on reading, you'll see if it did, too.

The first thing I did was to buy a note-book, it cost 9d, and then to put down six questions. Mind you, I don't say this is what most intervuers do, but then I didn't know what they do,\* and my idea was to have the questions ready. You see, if I didn't

\*And still don't. *Author.*

have them ready, none might come, but, having them, when I'd found a person who looked interesting enough to interview, I could shoot whichever question he or she looked most like. Of course, I had to make the questions different, because people are different.

The six questions were, i.e.:

- (1) What is your ambishun?
- (2) Do you like animals, and if so, which best?
- (3) Would you say Charles the First should of been beheaded?
- (4) At what age should people start smoking, if ever?
- (5) What about India?
- (6) Do you believe in large or small families?

The last question was short of by Green.

Well, out I went, not feeling so much like an author this time as what's called a journalist, and the first 26 people I passed all looked dull. But the 27th seemed more interesting, he had a red face and a white moustache, so I said to him, "What about India?" but I don't think he heard because he didn't stop, so I didn't stop either, it was what you might call a miss.

The next interesting person I came to was a tall woman in purple sitting on a seat. She was interesting because she was so tall, I believe if she'd let me measure her we'd of found she was seven feet!

"Excuse me," I said, "but do you believe in large or small families?"

She seemed surprised, so I thought perhaps another question would be better and I changed it, now saying,

"What is your ambishun?"

"What?" she said.

"Ambishun," I said.

"Whose?" she said.

"Yours," I said.

"What's this?" she said. "A pick up?"

"I don't know what that means," I said, "but I see you don't care for my questions, I'm sorry, good morning."

And then I left her *un peu* quickment.

I was wondering if to give up, because honestly this sort of thing takes a lot out of you, when suddenly, lo! I spotted the very person I needed, i.e., an old man who looked 210 sitting outside an inn. Going up to him I said,

"Good morning."

"Eh?" he said.

"Good morning," I said.

"Eh?" he said.

"Well, anyway," I said, "may I ask you some questions?"

"Eh?" he said.

"Questions," I said.

Then the innkeeper came out and told me that this old man would only answer questions after being embrocated. I think that was the word, but I'm not sure. I asked how you did it, and he said you couldn't unless you had the price of a drink.

"Well, I've got 2½d," I said, "but I don't know whether that's the price. If it's not enough for a whole one, then give him as much as it will pay for."

He looked a bit funny, so thinking I mightn't of made it clear, or else he mightn't of learnt fractions, I said, "What I mean is, if the drink is, say, 5d, then give him half, but if it's, say, 7½d, then he can only have one third. I'm sorry I haven't more, but yesterday I bought a goldfish."

Note about the goldfish. This has nothing to do with this article, but I thought you might like to know, that is, if you're interested in goldfish, one person in nine is, and if you're not, well, this bit will soon be over, that it's an extraordinary goldfish, understanding French. For instance, if you say "Come up" to it it never moves, but when you say "*Monter*," that means rise, up it comes to the top of the water and opens its mouth for crumbs. End of note about the goldfish.

Well, anyway, after that the innkeeper did one of those sporting things which I should think you always remember in after-life, though of course I can't say yet for certain, not having had it.\* What he did was to go in and not only fill a glass about a mile high with beer for the old man, but fill another one with lemonade for me! It only showed that you should never judge people by their faces.

Well, I waited till the old man had drunk about half, that was only about one second, and then I said, desiring that none of the six questions looked like him, and leading up to another I'd worked out,

"You seem to have lived a jolly long time."

"Ay," he said.

"In fact, you must be jolly old," I said.

"Ay," he said.

"How old would you say you were?" I said.

"Ay," he said.

"What?" I said.

"Ay," he said.

"Can you say anything else?" I said.

"Ay," he said.

"What?" I said.

"Ay," he said.

The reader can easily see I am not

making this up, because if I was it would be better. Well, anyway, then I got an idea, he might be deaf, so I put my mouth to his ear and I said,

"Can you hear what I'm saying?"

Then he put his mouth to my ear and said,

"Ay."

Putting my mouth to his ear again I said,

"Then will you tell my readers how you have lived so long?"

And putting his mouth to my ear again he said,

"Ay."

After that he finished his drink and closed his eyes, seeming to go to sleep, so as it didn't seem much good I thought I wouldn't wake him, and I went.

But the innkeeper came running after me, and what do you think for? It was to give me back my 2½d!

"Oh, I say!" I said.

"That's all right," he said. "You go and buy another goldfish."

How was that for descent? I decided to put him among those people one thinks about when one feels gloomy. (The others are Green and Hammond.)

## Books

ONE of my pleasantest tasks since I returned from the Middle East has been to unpack my books and arrange them on the freshly-varnished shelves that I have erected in my new flat. After five years in a furniture depository which was mildly blitzed the books are not quite what they were, but on the whole the damage is not serious.

My books, like all Gaul, were always divided into three parts. Firstly there are several "sets" (Dickens, Conrad, Stevenson, and, oddly enough, Lord Lytton) which have always stood in stately rows in the glass-fronted bookcase in the room with the Indian (though some say Persian) carpet. These books have gilt on them and are beautifully clean and neat, because when I want to read Dickens or Stevenson or Conrad or Lytton at meals or in the bath or on a train journey I do not risk these de luxe editions but peruse their weaker brethren from Class II.

Class II comprises the bulk of my books, which stand in less stately rows in an open-fronted set of shelves in the room where I theoretically work. These books are shabby, but whole. Here and there a back is a bit bent

\* The after-life. *Author.*

with age, but these books are at least able to stand up fairly respectably in the shelves.

Class III consists of senile books, with backs broken with the strain of life, covers missing, and pages loose. If I were a strong-minded man all Class III would have been given to salvage long ago, because they are so untidy that they can only be kept in the dark cupboard under the glass-fronted book-case in the room with the Indian (or Chinese) carpet, their shame hidden from the public eye, except when, as always happens when we have a distinguished visitor such as an editor or member of the local Conservative Committee, the door slowly opens of its own volition and lowers our prestige.

In 1940 I went carefully through Class III, patriotism struggling with sentiment, and selected rather a small pile of books for salvage. A *Robinson Crusoe* (my fourth-best copy, with forty-four pages missing and no covers) was jettisoned after a struggle, with six old volumes of *Whitaker's Almanack* and a school prize given to my Great-Aunt Sarah in 1882 called *Dick Boltum*, or *The Boy Who Went Wrong*. This was quite an exciting story, but the last chapter was missing and all the female characters in the illustrations had been decorated with long black beards, I fear by the hand of Great-Aunt Sarah herself, though she had given up that sort of devilry when I knew her personally.

Also in Class III were books of such peculiar shape that they would not fit into shelves, such as a huge *Life of Meissonier*, given me by a dear friend, possibly out of pure friendship but more likely because he also had no

shelf that would hold it. A lot of long thin books of views have also been relegated to Class III for the same reason. These Awkward Squad books have sometimes made me wonder whether there is not something after all to be said for the Socialist idea of uniformity. If all the publishers would get together and agree to publish books exactly the same size it would be so much easier to arrange them on the shelves.

There are only two possible methods of arranging books. Either you fix them in the shelves according to shape and size, or according to author and subject. The former arrangement looks much neater in the room, but personally I think it hardly fair to let a stand-offish man like Carlyle dwell between, say, *Love Wins Through*, by Carmelia Sweetslop and a 1922 *Bradshaw*. Nor does Wordsworth look at home between *The Luck of the Roarin' X*, and *Pig-Feeding as an Art*.

So this time I have arranged them in authors, and managed to get poets well away from thrillers, and classics decently separated from gazetteers. The poets gave me most trouble, being, in the eccentric manner of genius, of the oddest shapes and sizes. Tennyson is tall and thin, Cowper short and fat and shiny, Shakespeare in seven distinct shapes, and Waller so minute in shape and type that I have never read him.

It took me three whole days to get the books arranged to my taste, but by sadly putting surplus poets and thrillers into Class III and filling up a blank in the classics shelf with my own two novels (though these are not as yet generally recognized as classics), I managed to complete the job. I had

been aware, however, that there were some "deserters," having much the feeling I used to have when I got my Kugombas on morning parade. With the Kugombas the absentees were generally George Peter Lupululu and Zedekiah Bugombosa, who had a tendency to escape to the Arab village and fill themselves up with strong wines. As the missing books were mostly Victorian Prime Ministers, however (including all three volumes of Gladstone), I could hardly suspect them of emulating George Peter and Zedekiah, so I presumed that I must have given them to salvage in a blind moment of patriotism.

Next day, however, a box arrived with an apologetic note from the furniture depository, who said it had been overlooked. It contained not only Gladstone and Palmerston and the rest of their gang, but a lot more poets and thrillers. Edith suggests putting them in Class III, but I suppose I shall have to rearrange the whole lot, even if it means putting an extra shelf over the door, a thing I have always avoided since the gas man was stunned by *Webster's Dictionary* in 1931 through slamming the door too violently.

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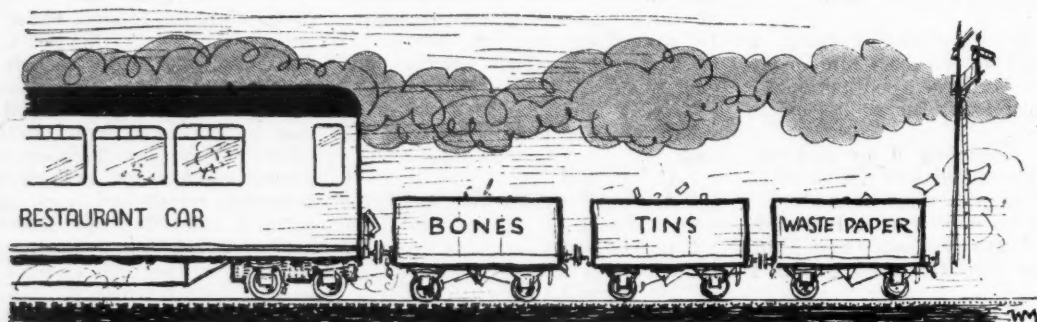
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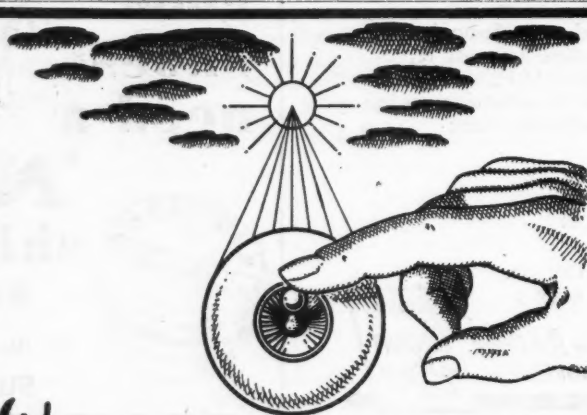
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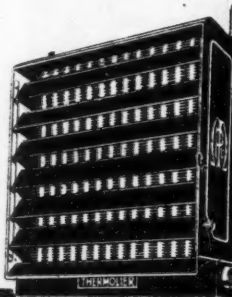


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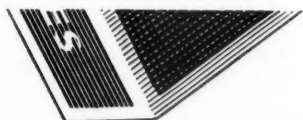
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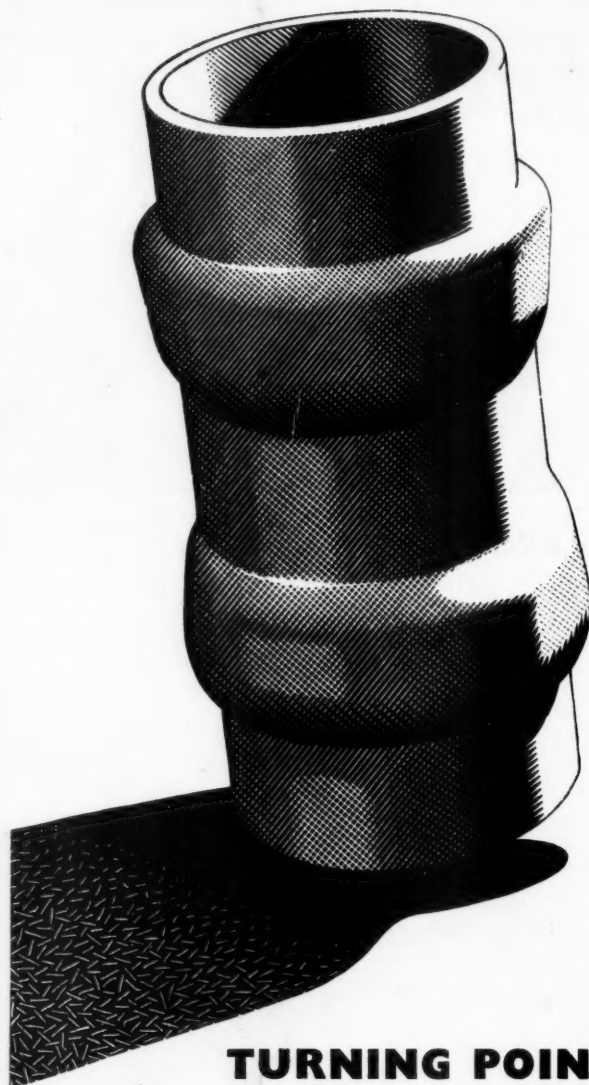
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